

# Understanding Lead Poisoning

## A guide for parents of children with high lead levels



Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program  
Call for free: 1-800-532-9571  
Assistance available in other languages.

## What is Lead Poisoning?

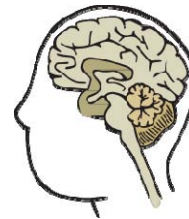
**Lead poisoning is caused by swallowing or breathing lead. Lead poisons children when it gets into their bodies**

## What are the symptoms of lead poisoning?

Most children who have lead poisoning do not look or act sick. A lead test is the only way to know if your child has lead poisoning.

Some children may have:

- Upset stomach
- Trouble eating or sleeping
- Headache
- Trouble paying attention



## What are the long-term effects of lead?

The harm done by lead may never go away. Lead in the body can:

- Hurt the brain, kidneys, and nervous system
- Slow down growth and development
- Make it hard to learn
- Damage hearing and speech
- Cause behavior problems

## How long does lead stay in the body?

Lead can stay in the body for a long time. Young children absorb lead more easily than adults. **If your child has lead poisoning, the doctor may give you medicine to help the body get rid of lead.**

**Children do not have to eat paint chips to get lead poisoning. Most children get lead poisoning from dust on their hands and toys.**



### **How do children get lead poisoning?**

Most of the lead poisoning in Massachusetts comes from lead paint dust in older homes. Many homes built before 1978 have lead paint on the inside and the outside of the building.

When old paint peels and cracks, it creates lead paint chips and lead dust. Home renovations also create lead dust. Lead dust lands on the floor. Lead gets into a child's body when he puts his hands and toys in his mouth. Children can also breathe in lead dust.

Children between the ages of 9 months and 6 years are most at risk. Even at low levels, lead can make it hard for children to learn, pay attention and behave. **If you are pregnant, lead can hurt your baby.**

**CLPPP stands for the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program.**

# Understanding the Lead Test

## What is a lead test?

In a lead test, a blood sample is taken from the child's finger or arm. The test measures how much lead is in your child's blood. Most children have lead levels under 5.

## Finger or Arm?

- Blood taken from the finger is called a **capillary** sample.
- Blood taken from the arm is called a **venous** sample.

## Getting a Second Test

It is important that your child be tested for lead a second time. Call your doctor or health clinic to set up a second lead test.



Capillary (finger)



Lead Level	Next Test
5-14	test your child again within <b>3 months</b>
15-19	test your child again within <b>2 months</b>
20 or more	test your child again within <b>1 month</b>

# What Does My Child's Lead Level Mean?

## 5 to 24

A blood lead level of 5 or more is not safe.

- Most children will not look or act sick.
- The doctor may give your child iron. Talk to your doctor about learning or development problems. Your child may need a special education plan.
- It is important to find and fix the lead hazards in your home. Have your home tested for lead.
- Remember to test your child again with a venous sample!

## 25 or more

A child who is under 6 years old with a lead level of 25 or more is lead **poisoned**.

- Your child may have to stay in the hospital. The doctor may give your child medication to help get the lead out of their body. This is called **“chelation.”**
- Some children may have trouble speaking, hearing, or paying attention. Ask your doctor about learning problems. You may need a special education plan for your child.
- If your child has lead poisoning, your home **must** be tested for lead. An inspector from CLPPP will check your home for lead. If there is lead in your home, it must be fixed.
- Remember to bring your child for a second lead test within one month!

## Find the Lead in Your Home

### Have your home tested for lead.

It is important to find out where your child is getting lead. If you rent your home, ask your landlord to test your home for lead. If your landlord refuses, call CLPPP. A state inspector will test your home for free.

If you own your home, hire a licensed lead inspector to test your home.

### What if there is lead paint in my home?

If there is lead paint in your home, the owner must fix it. Fixing the lead paint in a home is called **deleading**.

Deleading can be dangerous. It must be done by someone who has been trained to do the work safely. Some work can only be done by a licensed deleader. To learn more, call CLPPP to request a copy of the Deleading booklet.

### If you own your home, you can get money to help you pay for deleading.

Call the Get The Lead Out Program at 1-617-854-1000 for details.

#### Do you rent your home?

If you do, your landlord must pay to fix the lead in your home. Families with children under 6 years old are protected by law.



## Other Sources of Lead

Lead can be found in places other than paint.

### Lead is in handmade pots and dishes.

- Glazed pottery, like beanpots
- Samovars and other pots with lead solder



### Lead is in many workplaces.

- Construction work
- Auto repair
- Plumbing
- Places where people work with batteries
- Places where people do welding or smoldering

### Lead is in products from other countries.

- Candy, especially candy and wrappers from Mexico
- Make-up
- Toy jewelry
- Imported cans of food
- Home remedies, especially red, yellow, orange or white powders used for stomachaches (such as Azarcon or Paylooah)



### Lead is in soil and water.

- Dirt
- Plumbing pipes (solder)



### Lead is in some crafts and sports.

- Fishing sinkers
- Bullets
- Stained-glass making

## Learn How to Protect Your Child

The first step is to find and remove the lead in your home as soon as possible. The longer your child is around lead, the more the lead will hurt their body. Have your home inspected for lead paint. Be aware of other sources of lead.

Until the lead is removed, there are 3 easy things you can do to protect your child from lead:

- Clean up dust in your home
- Keep children away from lead paint and dust
- Feed your child healthy foods







**Here's what you can do to protect your child:**

- **Clean up lead dust.**
- **Keep children away from lead paint.**
- **Give your child healthy foods.**

**Keep reading to learn more.**

## Clean Up Lead Dust

### Wet wipe often to reduce lead dust.

- Do not use a vacuum or a broom to clean up lead paint or dust. This can spread dust into the air.
- Be sure to clean in and around windows, play areas and floors.
- Clean at least once a week.

### Wash hands and toys often.

- Wash your child's hands often and always before eating and sleeping.
- Wash your children's toys with soap and water.

### Change clothes after work.

- If a family member works with lead, they should change clothes before they come home. They should shower before playing with children.
- Wash work clothes separate from the rest of the laundry.

### Take shoes off before coming inside.

This helps keep dirt and dust out of your home. Use a doormat to wipe your feet.



## How to Clean



### 1) Wear Gloves.



### 2) Use a Spray Bottle.

This will reduce dust. Wash surfaces with all-purpose cleaner. Scrub well.



### 3) Use Paper Towels.

Use a new paper towel to clean each area. Do not use a cloth or sponge - this will only spread the dust.



### 4) Throw out with the Trash.

Put the paint chips and paper towels in a plastic bag. Close the bag tightly.



### 5) Wash your Hands after Cleaning.

## Keep Children Away from Lead Paint

### Cover loose paint.

Use contact paper or duct tape to cover loose paint in and around windows and walls.



### Block access to lead paint.

- Move furniture in front of peeling paint or plaster.
- Never place furniture where a child may climb on it and fall out of a window.
- Keep the lower part of the window closed.
- Open only the upper part, if you can.
- Change your child's bedroom. If your child's bedroom has chipping paint, use another room.

### Renovate safely.

- Do not do any remodeling or repair work until your home has been inspected for lead.
- To learn more about lead-safe work practices, call CLPPP.

### Be Careful

Home repairs like sanding or scraping can make dangerous lead dust.



## Give Your Child healthy Food

### Look for foods with calcium, iron, and vitamin C

These foods can help keep lead out of the body.

Calcium is in milk, yogurt, cheese, and green leafy vegetables like spinach.

Iron is in lean meats, fish, beans, cereals, nuts, and peanut butter.

Vitamin C is in oranges, tomatoes, green and red peppers, and juice.



### Give your child healthy snacks like:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Whole grain crackers
- Cheese and yogurt

### Give your child 4 to 6 small meals a day.

- Children absorb less lead on a full stomach.

### Make meal times safer.

- Eat at the table.
- Don't eat food that has fallen on the floor.
- Wash your child's hands before every snack or meal.
- Use cold water for cooking, drinking, and making formula.

## The Massachusetts Lead Law

The Lead Law protects children under 6 years old who live in a home built before 1978. If there is lead paint in the home, the owner must fix it.

Property owners must obey the law. If a child gets lead poisoning from their home, the owner or landlord is responsible.



### Discrimination

If you rent your home:

- Your landlord cannot evict you or raise your rent because of lead paint.
- A landlord cannot refuse to rent to you because you have children, even if there is lead in the home. This is illegal.
- A landlord cannot refuse to rent to you because of your race, income, or disability.
- If you have a problem with discrimination, call CLPPP for help.

**Don't Forget**

- Bring your child back for a second lead test
- Have your home inspected for lead.
- Keep your children away from lead paint and dust.



CLPPP stands for the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. If you have questions about lead, call CLPPP for toll free at 1-800-532-9571 or visit [www.mass.gov/dph/CLPPP](http://www.mass.gov/dph/CLPPP)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

**Childhood Lead Poisoning**

**Prevention Program (CLPPP)**

**Massachusetts Department of Public Health**

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TTY: 617-624-5286

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On the web: [www.mass.gov/dph/clppp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/clppp)



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